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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISTANBUL 000508

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SUB-GOVERNORS SURVEY SECURITY AND POLITICS IN
ISTANBUL

Classified By: CG David Arnett for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In recent meetings, several of Istanbul's kaymakams (sub-governors) were surprisingly open in describing the challenges they face in overseeing proper functioning of the security apparatus. Pointing to a massive rural-urban migration to Istanbul over the past several decades as a central source of difficulty, the kaymakams discussed their concerns related to street children and crimes committed by minors; proper handling of demonstrations and protests; rural-urban migration; and improving police training. All were eager to underline their firm belief that Turkey and the U.S. would remain close allies and friends despite recent difficulties in the relationship. END SUMMARY.

Istanbul's Sub-Districts

12. (U) Poloff recently met with kaymakams for Bagcilar, Sisli, and Kadikoy districts in Istanbul. The three districts, very different in terms of income levels, commercial interests, and location, roughly mirror the diversity of economic conditions among Istanbul's 12-million-plus population. Bagcilar, located on the northwestern edge of Istanbul's European side, is a classic gecekondu (literally "landed at night," a neighborhood of recent arrivals to the city, often interspersed with squatters and small businesses). Sisli, in central European Istanbul, has both a thriving commercial district and residential areas spanning the entire range of incomes, from very poor to affluent. Its population of 300,000 people swells to one million during the day, as workers crowd in from outlying areas. Kadikoy, a central district on the Asian side, has a variety of retail and commercial businesses, a pedestrian neighborhood and shoreline area popular with locals, and a largely middle-class residential area.

Bagcilar and Gaziosmanpasa

13. (C) Poloff met April 3 with Bagcilar's acting kaymakam, Aziz Inci. Inci said that most residents of neighborhoods like Bagcilar are immigrants from Turkey's rural areas and Southeast, with few adults born in Istanbul. Inci believes that most come to Istanbul for economic reasons, and that "security reasons" as a justification for migration ended in about 1995.

14. (U) Inci views the primary challenge of his job as one of providing infrastructure. Working to solve shortcomings in education, health, and social services, and combating joblessness, are his main preoccupations. In order to make necessary improvements, as kaymakam he must often work not only with the governor's office, but also with neighboring kaymakams and the Istanbul mayor in order to deal with cross-cutting issues such as electricity, transportation, and sewage.

15. (C) One way in which kaymakams come into direct contact with political parties is through such development projects. Inci said that local political party offices often show interest when the kaymakam is making decisions on where to improve infrastructure, or whom to hire for certain contracts. Additionally, political parties seek to "bandwagon" onto successful projects, claiming them as their own initiatives to score points with the local electorate.

Sisli

16. (C) Sisli kaymakam Osman Demir also pointed to

infrastructure development as a key need for Istanbul's social development, and also as a means of enhancing security. Demir expressed concern about what he perceives to be a growing pattern of criminal activities among minors. Demir pointed to economic hard times, a burgeoning youth population, and lighter punishments on young offenders as causes of this problem. Demir believes some criminal elements are recruiting minors to avoid harsher punishments.

17. (C) Demir pointed to a continuing presence of illegal immigrants in Istanbul as a major problem. Sisli has a number of night clubs in the Elmadag neighborhood that have performers and some prostitutes from the former Soviet Union. Additionally, garment and leather businesses in the Nisantasi neighborhood cater to suitcase traders from the same countries, and signs in Russian are nearly as frequent as Turkish or English.

18. (C) Demir argued that trafficking in Istanbul is largely voluntary. He laid out several "typical" scenarios, which include Chinese workers attempting to enter Europe by transiting Istanbul, and women from the former Soviet Union working as shuttle traders in Istanbul, and occasionally "raising capital" by engaging in prostitution. Demir felt that both local and international mafia have a hand in this ongoing problem, but that economic under-development in neighboring countries was its major impetus. (As kaymakam, Demir oversees the security apparatus for the Sisli district, and has intimate personal knowledge of all significant arrests, detentions, and police investigations within the area.)

Kadikoy

19. (C) Kadikoy Kaymakam Yuksel Peker was surprisingly frank about problems of police administration and human rights. Peker conceded that torture in Turkey is still a problem, but argued it can be solved by proper education. "Police, in their zeal to extract information, believe that torture is the best option. Training them in other methods of proper interrogation will stop them," he suggested.

110. (C) Peker, like his other colleagues, believed that many of Istanbul's current social ills are caused by severe pressures brought about by massive rural-urban migration. He echoed their belief that infrastructural improvements will do much to ease these pressures, and encourage law-abiding behavior.

What's a kaymakam?

111. (U) Kaymakams (sub-governors) are chiefs of Ministry of the Interior offices in Turkey's provincial sub-divisions, and thus formally the chief representatives of the Turkish State below the level of governors. Career civil servants, they must be university graduates of public administration or political affairs faculties. They may be graduates of either public or private universities. Upon graduation, they take an entrance exam to enter the kaymakam program, and then begin an approximately one-month training program at the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara. Kaymakams generally aspire eventually to be appointed as governors. Early in their careers, they usually do a one-year training program in the U.S. or U.K. to study Anglo-Saxon local administration.

112. (C) A kaymakam's career usually moves geographically from East to West. After completing MoI training in Ankara, a young kaymakam is typically posted somewhere in the rural southeast. Throughout the region, kaymakams are generally young men in their late-20s to early 30s. Though technically in charge of the security apparatus throughout the sub-district (sometimes a very large geographic area), kaymakams in this period of their careers are heavily supervised by governors and deputy governors in the provincial capitals. At the same time, they are somewhat eclipsed by a security apparatus that, while respectful to them as the future governors of Turkey, keeps them somewhat distant from direct control over jandarma and other security operations. On one occasion, polooff met with a jandarma colonel and kaymakam simultaneously. While technically of higher rank, the kaymakam was deferential to the colonel, who was both older and more experienced.

¶13. (C) A young kaymakam understands his limitations: he is a colonel without a regiment, charged not with independent decision making on security matters, but with communicating the governor's instructions to the local security apparatus, and reporting back on the local situation. "Do well in small matters and you will be rewarded" is the order of the day. A young kaymakam looks to onward assignment as a deputy governor or a kaymakam in a more comfortable location. On more than one occasion, young kaymakams and deputy governors asked poloff about an American FSO's career track, and claimed to see strong similarities.

¶14. (U) As a kaymakam's career progresses, the geography changes, with postings in Turkey's coastal areas and larger cities. While poloff estimates that median age for a kaymakam in the rural Southeast is just over 30 years old, Istanbul's kaymakams average close to 50. Previous posts for kaymakams poloff spoke with in Istanbul include the Aegean area, Ankara and Istanbul.

¶15. (C) MoI civil servants who pursue this career path typically display an awareness of Turkish ethnic and geographical diversity that may be lost on many of the Ankara-Istanbul elite and even on many governors. While typically Kemalist in outlook, they often exhibit a clear understanding of the problems that have given rise to conflict and political instability. Uniformly, when speaking about political unrest in both rural and urban settings, kaymakams have stressed to poloff their belief in the importance of opportunity for Kurdish and Turkish poor, stating that they believe their role in apportioning funds for development projects to be very important in enhancing security and discouraging extremism. Improvements in education, state-funded health care, and physical infrastructure are thus key concerns for kaymakams throughout Turkey.

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